

*See Ctr. Addition*

28 June 1968

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Discussion with Col. White on Records Storage

1. At 3:30 Wednesday, 26 June 1968, Mr. Houston and I met with Col. White in his office concerning an Agency Committee to select material for Presidential Libraries. As set forth in a separate memorandum, after some 15 or 20 minutes that primary topic was developed to a point where Col. White planned to discuss it further with the Director.

2. At this point and for the next 25 or 30 minutes the discussion switched to the problem of records storage through a comment Col. White made about the large volume of records in the Agency. He said he is seriously considering asking every office to reduce its records holdings by at least fifty percent. He explained that he told Mr. [REDACTED] my predecessor, that he did not intend to build another Records Center addition. I explained that we were very familiar with his statement and as a result the Records Staff had disposed of 55,000 cubic feet of Agency Records in the last five years, and that although we had a hundred thousand cubic feet in the Records Center it was really only half of the total volume received. Further, we had arranged for the temporary storage of 25,000 feet of material at Suitland. Col. White said he would like to dispose of that material too.

3. Col. White commented that he was disturbed by what he felt was a "horse and buggy" approach to records storage. He felt that modern technology indicates all kinds of innovations and miniaturization possibilities. He recalled seeing something about putting a file cabinet of material in a container no larger than a desk calendar. I explained that all these micro reductions were feasible but expensive. He said that if we had a sound proposal for such modern records storage and knew what we needed and where we were going he could find five million dollars for it today, but he simply could not justify another hundred thousand dollars for additional records center construction.

4. Because this tangent on records storage was not on our original agenda I felt constrained to listen primarily, rather than to respond. Likewise, this unplanned discussion followed no pattern and some points seemed to come up without preliminaries or were left

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abruptly without conclusions. Nonetheless, Col. White was quite specific and I am anxious to indicate his positions as I understood them as well as to indicate my responses only to detail what Records Program background information I did provide at that time.

5. Col. White spoke of the many unnecessary files being maintained and volumes of useless paper being stored. I agreed and said that was why we were reluctant to encourage widespread microfilming. If a file was of little value in hard copy it was even less deserving to be microfilmed. It costs \$1.88 per year to store and service a cubic foot of hard copy files at the Center and it costs at least \$20 to microfilm that foot of paper.

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6. He recounted an old [redacted] proposal to file all incoming teletype copy. The plan would require 25 people and the files were important, even required by law, they said. He rejected the plan and reduced it to one file clerk. He feels there are many such file plans in existence. Only last week he personally screened his files with his staff and purged enough to preclude the need for another safe. He felt such purges could be carried out in every office. He wondered if he might put some 500 returnees into such a cleanup campaign. I said we were drafting a plan for such a project which called for about 55 returnees to work with component Records Officers in a review of files in Offices and the Records Center. I explained that there was some resistance in DDP to having inexperienced "outsiders" determining what office files were to be kept and what to destroy.

7. Col. White felt that much of the material being saved was never used. He felt it need not be kept in its original form. I explained that this was true with many files but the Records Center personnel were providing an average of 500 service actions per day on the records in the Center. I said that records disposition was double edged and was concerned with retention as well as destruction because certain records had to be saved. Also certain Vital Records had to be identified and protected.

8. At this point I expressed the need for full-time Records Officers to operate a "Total" Records Program in each component. I stated the concept that the Agency cannot expect to control records disposition unless something is done about records creation which means Reports Management, Correspondence Control, and Forms Management. This requires the assignment of these responsibilities to some one on a full-time basis. Col. White was not sure this was possible. He felt people would not take such assignments. He felt that in my position Records Management was worthwhile but that the others resisted it, felt trapped, and without any future. The conversation took another tangent and I could not explore this important point further.

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9. At one point I explained the use of "Microfiche" by Atomic Energy for its reports. This system of putting 65 pages onto a 4 x 6 inch plastic card does have some possible application in the Agency but would alter existing procedures and would require reading devices for the users of those Agency reports. Col. White said he knew how strongly some people resisted changes in existing systems.

10. I briefly touched on the new high density "microfiche" by National Cash Register called "PCMI" which puts 3,000 pages onto a 4 x 6 inch plastic card. I explained these all were possibilities but the Records Center was a service that stored material as it was received.

11. I told of the 4,000 cubic feet of NPIC films we received. These cost millions of dollars to get but the project does not include any budgeting for records storage. Yesterday the NPIC Records Officer told me these old films are frequently compared with new films and these would still be useful 20 years from now. Col. White felt the capabilities would be far beyond today in 20 years.

12. Col. White had another appointment and the meeting ended at 4:20. Mr. Houston stayed behind another 5 minutes to discuss briefly still another question.

  
CIA Records Administration Officer

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(6/28/68 - Circulated to all members of Rec. Admin. Branch)

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